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Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, I am pleased to present to the Senate the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies appropriations bill for fiscal year 2006. Since August 25, our Nation has been gripped by the devastation and destruction left in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. We have all watched in horror as this category 4 hurricane ravaged an entire region, and each of us share in the sorrow of those who have lost their lives and their livelihoods. I am confident that the strength of the American spirit will rise to this challenge and, just as we have many times before, that we can and will recover.

The bill before us today provides funding for many **U.S. Government functions that are critical to hurricane prediction**, response, and recovery. The Small Business Administration provides low-interest loans to disaster victims to rebuild their homes and businesses. The Economic Development Administration, under the Department of Commerce, can make funds available to distressed communities to help repair their physical infrastructure. Under the Department of Justice, State and local law enforcement assistance grants can help provide relief to gulf coast law enforcement agencies. **Finally, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is one of three lead agencies responsible for researching, forecasting, monitoring, and warning of hurricanes....**

**In the wake of three successive hurricanes last year and now Hurricane Katrina, we have also taken steps to ensure our Nation's ability to predict and monitor hurricanes. And we have done what we reasonably could within our purview to improve our response and recovery capabilities...The bill also recommends nearly \$7.2 billion for the Department of Commerce, including NOAA and NIST, which is an 8-percent increase over last year's funding level....In the science title of the bill, we have restored the 8-percent reduction from last year's enacted level that was proposed by NOAA. There is continued frustration among many of my Senate colleagues about the Department's repeated request to reduce NOAA funding. NOAA provides many critical functions to hurricane prediction and warning. Further, our oceans and atmosphere constitute one of our most precious natural resources, and I believe we can all appreciate the importance of both to human subsistence. I believe we should be increasing NOAA's budget, as the bill does, not cutting it.**